(a) whether it is a fact that Government are proposing to explore possibilities of restructuring the public sector oil companies and bring up a greater degree of professionalism to make them competitive;

(b) if so, the details thereof and whether the executives of the oil companies would be able to take quick decisions on the demands and supply problems of all the oil energy; and

(c) the basic changes and modifications proposed to be made in the constitution and functioning of the PSUs, to make up with the advancement made by china in the matter of energy security?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (c) Government have set up an Advisory Committee on Synergy in Energy on 17.1.2005 with the following terms of reference:

(I) Examining the core competence of the public sector undertakings in the petroleum and natural gas sector of India to assess their competitiveness in the evolving domestic and international scenario;

(II) Analyzing the various options of leveraging their strengths to optimally fulfil their required contribution to the national objectives of:

(i) Energy security;

(ii) Accelerated growth;

(iii) Sustained development; and

(iv) Social objectives of Government policy.

(III) Identifying the most appropriate structure and management system for the oil public sector undertakings to secure these ends.

The Advisory Committee is holding its deliberations. Further necessary action will be taken upon the receipt of the report of the Committee.

Security Deposit of LPG Cylinders under Deepam Scheme

1485. SHRI NANDI YELLAIAH: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government would reduce the security deposits of LPG cylinder of 14.2 kg. from Rs. 750 to Rs. 350 and from Rs. 350 to Rs. 150 for 5 kg. cylinder with regard to Below Poverty Line (BPL) families, so as to increase the number of beneficiaries under the Deepam Scheme;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (c) The PSU Oil Marketing Companies have been releasing 14.2 kg cylinder LPG connection to below poverty line women in the rural areas of Andhra Pradesh from July, 1999 and urban areas from February, 2000 under the Deepam Scheme of the Government of Andhra Pradesh. The cost of the security deposit and regulator is met by the Government of Andhra Pradesh. In so far as Oil Marketing Companies are concerned, they charge security deposit on LPG cylinder, based on cost of procurement of cylinders, uniformly throughout the country. Effective from January 2005, the rate of security deposit for new connections in the country has been increased from Rs. 650 to Rs. 850 per cylinder. However, for North Eastern states including Sikkim the rate remains unchanged at Rs. 500/- per cylinder.

ONGC's Bid for stake in a Russian Oil major

1486. SHRIMATI BIMBA RAIKAR: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the ONGC Videsh Ltd. is currently preparing to bid for a 15 per cent stake in the Yuganskneftgas assets, in the prime production fields of the Russian Oil major Yukos;

(b) whether the auction of Yukos assets is in danger of legal tussles on financial and management issues in the wake of Russian Government slapping claims of tax around $ 6.00 billion on Yukos; and

(c) whether China National Petroleum Corporation has also sounded Russia of its interest to acquire a 20 per cent stake in Yuganskneftgas and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) No, Sir.

(b) The auction of Yuganskneftgas, the main producing assets of Yukos is over.

(c) The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas does not posses any confirmed information in this regard.

Allocation of Kerosene to Bihar

†1487. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the demand of kerosene in Bihar during the last two years;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.